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ABSTRACT

In 1996, law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.9 million arrests of persons under the age of 18. According to Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) figures, juveniles accounted for 19% of all arrests and 19% of all violent crime in 1996. The substantial growth in juvenile crime that began in the late 1980s peaked in 1994. In 1996, for the second year in a row, the total number of juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses declined. Even so, the number of juvenile violent crime arrests was 60% above the 1987 level. These findings are derived from data reported annually by law enforcement officers to the FBI. One in four juvenile arrests was the arrest of a female, and juvenile arrests disproportionately involved minorities. In 1996, roughly equal numbers of arrests for violent crime involved black and white youths, a finding in marked contrast to the proportion of each in the general population. This is a finding with implications for those involved in work with urban youth, since cities have higher concentrations of minority residents. It is hard to determine the relative responsibility of juveniles for the U.S. Crime problem, but if one uses data for crimes cleared by arrests, it is apparent that the juvenile proportion of violent crime clearance has increased for the four components of the Violent Crime Index: murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. However, between 1995 and 1996, while the juvenile proportion of the U.S. population increased, the juvenile proportion of violent crimes decreased in each category. These statistics, and others from the FBI, may provide some encouragement to those who plan and implement crime prevention programs among urban youth. (Contains 21 graphs and 1 table.) (SLD)

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
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Shay Bilchik, Administrator

November 1997

JUVENILE JUSTICE BULLETIN

Juvenile Arrests 1996

Howard N. Snyder

In 1996, law enforcement agencies in the United States made an estimated 2.9 million arrests of persons under age 18.* According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), juveniles accounted for 19% of all arrests and 19% of all violent crime arrests in 1996. The substantial growth in juvenile violent crime arrests that began in the late 1980's peaked in 1994. In 1996, for the second year in a row, the total number of juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses—murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—declined. Even with these declines (3% in 1995 and 6% in 1996), the number of juvenile Violent Crime Index arrests in 1996 was 60% above the 1987 level. In comparison, the number of adult arrests for a Violent Crime Index offense in 1996 was 24% greater than in 1987.

These findings are derived from data reported annually by local law enforcement agencies across the country to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. Based on these data, the FBI prepares its annual *Crime in the United States* report, which summarizes crimes known to the police and arrests made during the reporting calendar year. This information is used to characterize the extent and nature of juvenile crime that comes to the attention of the justice system. Other recent findings from the UCR Program are:

- ◆ Juveniles were involved in 37% of all burglary arrests, 32% of robbery ar-

rests, 24% of weapon arrests, and 15% of murder and aggravated assault arrests in 1996.

- ◆ About 1 in every 220 persons ages 10 through 17 in the United States was arrested for a Violent Crime Index offense in 1996.
- ◆ Juvenile murder arrests declined 3% between 1993 and 1994, 14% between 1994 and 1995, and another 14% between 1995 and 1996. Juvenile arrests for murder in 1996 were at their lowest level in the 1990's, but still 50% above the number of arrests in 1987.
- ◆ Between 1992 and 1996, juvenile arrests for burglary declined 7% and juvenile arrests for motor vehicle theft declined 20%.
- ◆ Juveniles were involved in 14% of all drug arrests in 1996. Between 1992 and 1996, juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations increased 120%.
- ◆ Juvenile arrests for curfew violations increased 21% between 1995 and 1996 and 116% between 1992 and 1996. In 1996, 28% of curfew arrests involved juveniles under age 15 and 29% involved females.
- ◆ In 1996, 57% of arrests for running away from home involved females and 41% involved juveniles under age 15.
- ◆ Arrests of juveniles accounted for 13% of all violent crimes cleared by arrest in 1996—more specifically, 8% of murders, 12% of forcible rapes, 18% of robberies, and 12% of aggravated assaults.

From the Administrator

For the past decade, communities have expressed a growing concern about the rising rates of violent juvenile crime. With juvenile arrests still at levels significantly higher than in the late 1980's, this concern is certainly warranted. However, new data on juvenile violent crime arrests suggest a break in that trend as these numbers decline and offer hope for the future.

This analysis of the October 1997 release of the FBI's report, *Crime in the United States 1996*, provides a readable, useful summary of new national and State juvenile arrest statistics.

Perhaps the most important finding in this Bulletin is that all measures of juvenile violence known to law enforcement—the number of arrests, arrest rates, and the percentage of violent crimes cleared by juvenile arrests—are down. These decreases are occurring despite the growth in the juvenile population, a growth that will continue into the next decade. Indeed, the predictions of an onslaught of violent juvenile crime have been proven wrong 2 years in a row. We now need to build on these accomplishments by using effective prevention, early intervention, and graduated sanctions programs.

Shay Bilchik
Administrator

* Throughout this Bulletin, persons under age 18 are referred to as juveniles. See Notes on page 12.

For the second year in a row, arrests of juveniles for violent crimes declined in 1996, with murder arrests down 14% and robbery down 8%.

Most Serious Offense	1996 Estimated Number of Juvenile Arrests	Percent of Total Juvenile Arrests		Percent Change		
		Female	Under Age 15	1987-96	1992-96	1995-96
Total	2,851,700	25%	32%	35%	21%	3%
Crime Index total	855,400	25	38	14	2	-1
Violent Crime Index	135,100	15	30	60	3	-6
Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter	2,900	7	12	50	-18	-14
Forcible rape	5,600	2	34	-3	-7	0
Robbery	50,100	10	27	57	7	-8
Aggravated assault	76,600	20	32	70	2	-4
Property Crime Index	720,300	27	40	8	2	0
Burglary	135,100	10	38	-12	-7	3
Larceny-theft	502,400	34	42	14	9	0
Motor vehicle theft	72,800	15	26	9	-20	-10
Arson	10,100	11	67	36	7	-6
Nonindex						
Other assaults	234,100	28	41	100	29	3
Forgery and counterfeiting	8,600	37	12	3	8	-3
Fraud	27,000	25	29	6	62	6
Embezzlement	1,300	45	7	16	82	6
Stolen property (buying, receiving, possessing)	41,100	13	27	8	-5	-6
Vandalism	141,600	11	45	26	-2	-4
Weapons (carrying, possessing, etc.)	52,800	8	30	69	-10	-9
Prostitution and commercialized vice	1,300	52	13	-41	10	5
Sex offense (except forcible rape and prostitution)	17,200	8	50	8	-15	6
Drug abuse violations	211,500	13	17	133	120	6
Gambling	2,800	3	13	213	49	10
Offenses against the family and children	8,400	37	32	113	67	29
Driving under the influence	18,500	16	3	-28	22	20
Liquor law violations	155,200	30	11	-5	29	21
Drunkenness	23,500	17	14	-11	27	11
Disorderly conduct	215,000	24	34	93	44	9
Vagrancy	3,700	15	22	18	-14	-7
All other offenses (except traffic)	450,200	23	28	35	26	1
Suspicion	1,600	23	27	-33	-71	1
Curfew and loitering	185,100	29	28	113	116	21
Runaways	195,700	57	41	20	7	-5

- ◆ With the second year of decline, juvenile arrests for violent crimes in 1996 were below the 1993 level. However, the number of violent crime arrests in 1996 was still 60% above the 1987 level. If each Violent Crime Index arrest in 1996 involved a different juvenile, it would mean that 1 of every 220 persons ages 10 through 17 in 1996 was arrested for one of these crimes.
- ◆ The decline in murder arrests in 1996 follows declines in both 1995 and 1994. Even so, the number of arrests in 1996 was still 50% greater than in 1987.
- ◆ In 1996, females were involved in 15% of Violent Crime Index arrests, 34% of larceny-theft arrests, 30% of liquor law arrests, 29% of curfew arrests, and 57% of arrests for running away from home.

Data source: *Crime in the United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), tables 29, 32, 34, 36, and 38. Arrest estimates were developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice.

Violent crime arrests peaked at age 18

In general, arrests for most offenses increase with age, reaching a peak in the later teenage years, then decline. However, this decline is sharp for some offenses and more gradual for others.

In 1996, 30% of juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses involved juveniles under age 15, with 1% under age 10. The number of violent crime arrests increased with each age group between 10 and 17 and peaked with 18-year-olds, although the numbers of arrests of 17- and 18-year-olds were nearly equal in 1996. Overall, violent crime arrests declined gradually with age; for example, in 1996, the number of violent crime arrests of persons age 24 was still 64% of the number for the peak age group.

Most Serious Offense	Peak Age of Arrest	Percent of Peak at Age 24
Violent Crime Index	18	64%
Murder	19	54
Forcible rape	18	43
Robbery	17	31
Aggravated assault	18	84
Property Crime Index	16	31
Burglary	16	29
Larceny-theft	16	32
Motor vehicle theft	16	22
Simple assault	16-17	93
Weapons	18	48
Drug abuse violations	18	55

Data source: Analysis of data from *Crime in the United States 1996*, table 38.

However, arrests for some violent crimes declined less with age than did others. For example, the number of arrests for aggravated assault changed relatively little between ages 18 and 24, while the number of robbery arrests declined substantially across these young adult years. Arrests for murder and forcible rape also showed far more decline with age than did arrests for aggravated assault.

In 1996, 40% of juvenile arrests for Property Crime Index offenses involved juveniles under age 15, with 2% under age 10. The peak age of arrest for property crimes was lower than for violent crimes. Like robbery arrests (and unlike arrests for aggravated and simple assault) property crime arrests declined sharply with age—the number of arrests of 24-year-olds was less than one-third that of the peak age.

One in four juvenile arrests in 1996 was an arrest of a female

Law enforcement agencies made 723,000 arrests of females below the age of 18 in 1996. Increases in arrests between 1992 and 1996 were greater for juvenile females than juvenile males in most offense categories.

Most Serious Offense	Percent Change in Juvenile Arrests 1992-1996	
	Female	Male
Violent Crime Index	25%	0%
Murder	-8	-19
Forcible rape	NA	-7
Robbery	20	6
Aggravated assault	28	-3
Property Crime Index	21	-4
Burglary	3	-8
Larceny-theft	25	2
Motor vehicle theft	-4	-23
Arson	10	6
Simple assault	45	24
Weapons	8	-11
Drug abuse violations	164	114
Curfew violations	139	108
Runaways	8	5

Data source: *Crime in the United States 1996*, table 35.

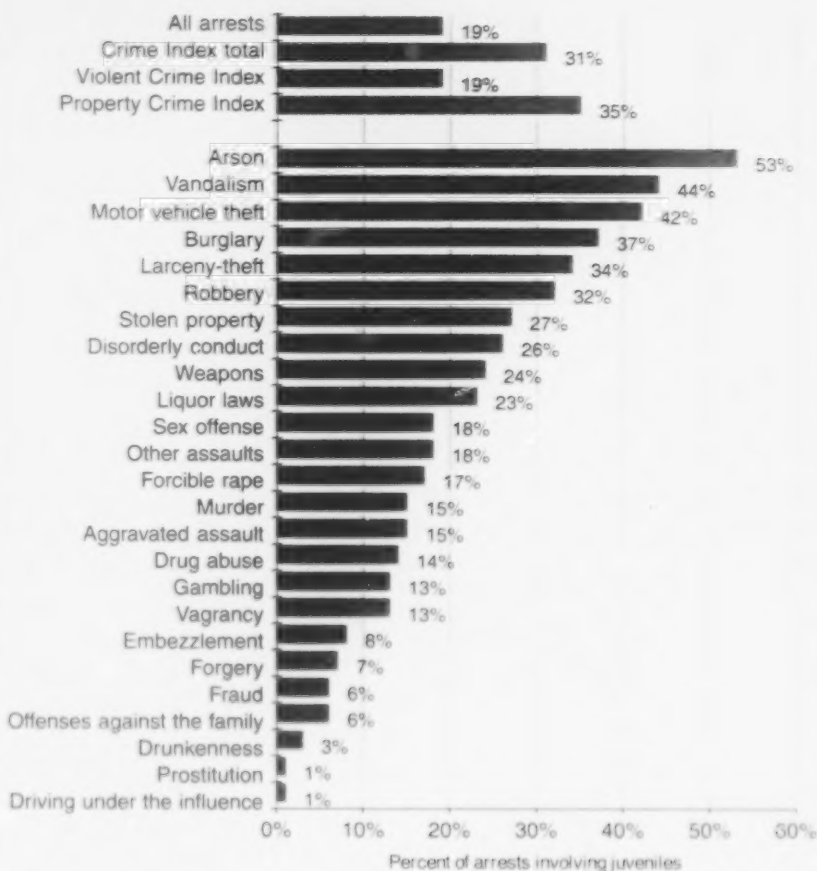
Juvenile arrests disproportionately involved minorities

The racial composition of the juvenile population in 1996 was approximately 80% white, 15% black, and 5% other races, with juveniles of Hispanic ethnicity being classified as white. In 1996, roughly equal numbers of arrests for violent crimes involved white and black youth. This was in contrast to the proportion of each group in the general population.

Most Serious Offense	White Proportion of Juvenile Arrests in 1996
Murder	39%
Forcible rape	55
Robbery	40
Aggravated assault	58
Burglary	74
Larceny-theft	71
Motor vehicle theft	58
Weapons	63
Drug abuse violations	62
Runaways	78

Data source: *Crime in the United States 1996*, table 43.

Juveniles were involved in a much smaller proportion of violent crime arrests than property crime arrests in 1996



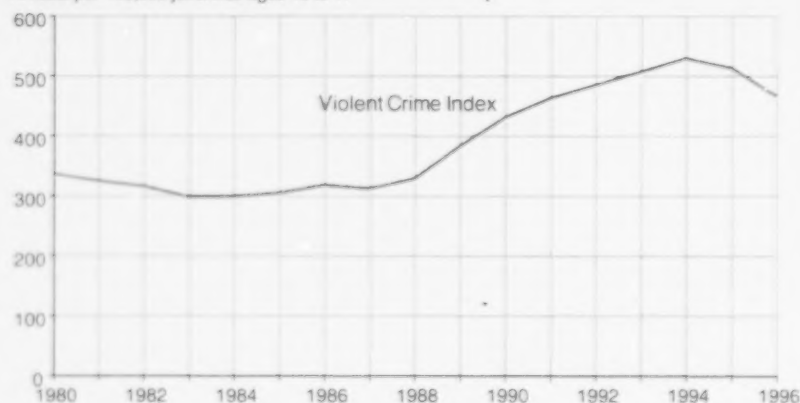
- ◆ Nearly one-third (32%) of all persons arrested for robbery in 1996 were under age 18, substantially above the juvenile proportion of arrests for other violent crimes: forcible rape (17%), murder (15%), and aggravated assault (15%).
- ◆ Persons between ages 10 and 49 commit most crime. In fact, in 1996, more than 95% of all arrests involved persons in this age range. Juveniles ages 10 through 17 made up 19% of this segment of the U.S. population. Compared with their proportion in the 10- to 49-year-old population, juveniles were disproportionately involved in arrests for arson, vandalism, motor vehicle theft, burglary, larceny-theft, robbery, stolen property, disorderly conduct, weapons, and liquor law violation offenses. Except for robbery, the juvenile proportion of violent crime arrests was roughly equivalent to their representation in the population of 10- to 49-year-olds.

Note: Running away from home and curfew violations are not presented in this figure because, by definition, only juveniles can be arrested for these offenses.

Data source: *Crime in the United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), table 38.

After more than a decade of consistency, the juvenile violent crime arrest rate began to increase in 1989, peaked in 1994, then fell in 1995 and again in 1996, returning to the 1991 level

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17

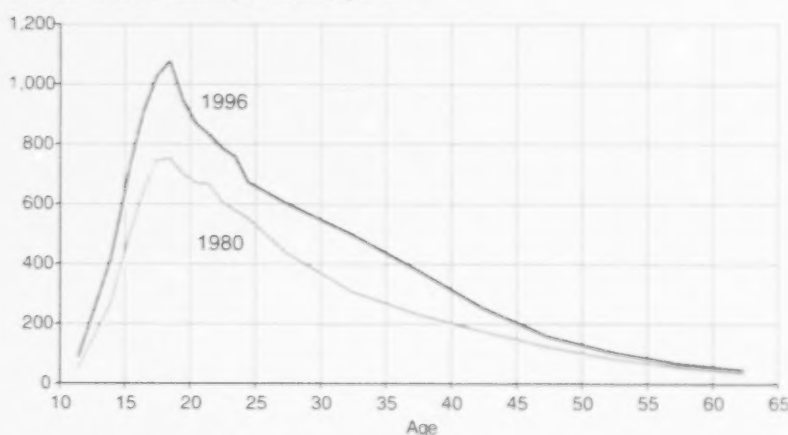


- ◆ Between 1994 and 1996, the juvenile arrest rate for Violent Crime Index offenses dropped 12%, to a level of 465 arrests for every 100,000 persons ages 10–17. The 1996 level is, however, about 50% above rates of the early 1980's.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

Between 1980 and 1996, violent crime arrest rates increased substantially for all ages

Violent Crime Index arrests per 100,000 population



- ◆ There were large increases between 1980 and 1996 in juvenile violent arrest rates, with rates for younger juveniles (ages 10–14) up 68% and for older juveniles (ages 15–17) up 42%.
- ◆ Large increases were also found in the adult age groups. The rate for young adults (ages 18 and 19) increased 39%, while the rate for persons in their early twenties increased 28%. The largest increase in violent crime arrests in the adult population was for persons in their thirties, up 64%.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 2 on page 12 for detail.]

The Violent Crime Index monitors violence trends

The FBI assesses trends in the volume of violent crimes by monitoring four offenses that are consistently reported by law enforcement agencies nationwide and are pervasive in all geographical areas of the country. These four crimes are murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Other crimes may be considered violent by their nature or effect (e.g., kidnapping, weapons possession, extortion, drug selling), but the four crimes that together form the Violent Crime Index have traditionally been used as the Nation's barometer of violent crime.

The juvenile violent crime arrest rate declined 12% from 1994 to 1996

The juvenile violent crime arrest rate in 1988 was nearly identical to the rate in 1980; in fact, this rate had changed little since the early 1970's. However, between 1988 and 1994, the rate increased 64%. This steady increase after years of stability focused national attention on the juvenile violent crime problem.

The most recent arrest and population data show that in 1996, the juvenile violent crime arrest rate declined 9% from the 1995 level, returning to the 1991 level. While the 1996 rate was still 42% above the 1988 level, 1996 is the second year in a row the juvenile violent crime arrest rate has declined, following a consistent pattern of increases dating back to the late 1980's.

Few juveniles are arrested for violent crimes

The juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate tells us that in 1996, there were 465 arrests for these violent crimes for every 100,000 youth in the United States between 10 and 17 years of age. If each of these arrests involved a different juvenile (i.e., if each juvenile arrested in 1996 for a Violent Crime Index offense were arrested only once that year—which is very unlikely), then less than one-half of 1% of all persons ages 10 through 17 in the United States were arrested for a Violent Crime Index offense in 1996.

Of all the Violent Crime Index offenses, juvenile arrests for murder showed the greatest decline in the last 3 years

Murder

- ◆ The rate at which juveniles were arrested for murder peaked in 1993 at a level more than double that of the early 1980's.
- ◆ Following the 1993 peak, juvenile murder arrest rates declined substantially in each of the next 3 years, for a total decline of 31%. The 1996 juvenile murder arrest rate was the lowest in the decade, but still more than 50% greater than the rate in the early 1980's.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Forcible Rape

- ◆ The rate of juvenile arrests for forcible rape hit a 10-year low in 1995. The rate in 1996 was only slightly above the low point of 1995.
- ◆ Unlike aggravated assault (a crime that has many of the same attributes as forcible rape), the juvenile arrest rate for forcible rape has fluctuated within a limited range over the last two decades.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Robbery

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for robbery declined through most of the 1980's, reaching a low point in 1988.
- ◆ Between 1988 and 1994, the rate at which juveniles were arrested for robbery increased 70%. This arrest rate declined slightly in 1995 and by 10% in 1996.
- ◆ With these declines, the juvenile arrest rate for robbery in 1996 returned to the levels of the early 1990's and was just 7% above the 1980 rate.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Aggravated Assault

- ◆ The rate at which juveniles were arrested for aggravated assault increased steadily between 1983 and 1994, up more than 120%.
- ◆ The aggravated assault arrest rate fell for the first time in more than a decade in 1995 (down 4%) and again in 1996 (down 9%), returning to the 1991 level.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

The juvenile arrest rate for property crime in 1996 was the lowest rate in a decade

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

Juvenile arrests for property crimes remain stable

As with violent crime, the FBI assesses trends in the volume of property crimes by monitoring four offenses that are consistently reported by law enforcement agencies nationwide and are pervasive in all geographical areas of the country. These four crimes, which form the Property Crime Index, are burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

For the period from 1987 through 1996, during which violent crime arrests rose dramatically, juvenile property crime arrest rates (as measured by the Property Crime Index) remained relatively constant. In fact, the 1996 rate of approximately 2,400 arrests for every 100,000 youth in the United States between 10 and 17 years of age is the lowest in the 10-year period.

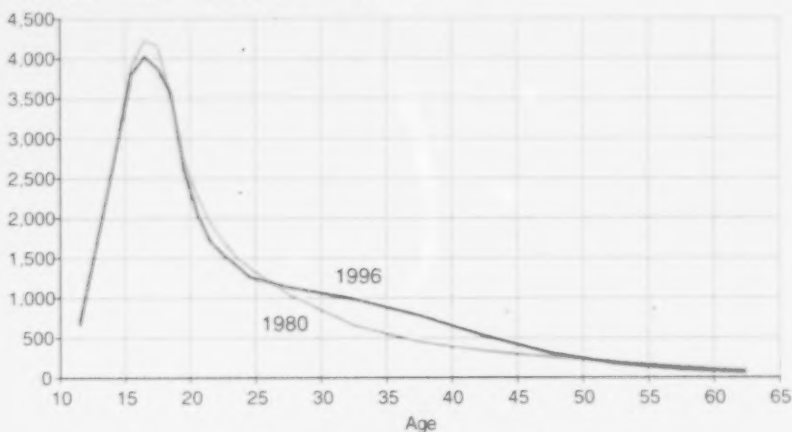
Most arrested juveniles are referred to court

In most States, some persons below the age of 18 are, due to their age, or by statutory exclusion of certain offenses from juvenile court jurisdiction, under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. For those persons under age 18 and under the original jurisdiction of their State's juvenile justice system, the FBI's UCR Program monitors what happens as a result of the arrest. This is the only instance in the UCR Program in which the statistics on arrests coincide with State variations in the legal definition of a juvenile.

In 1996, 23% of arrests involving youth who were eligible in their State for processing in the juvenile justice system were handled within the law enforcement agency, and then the youth was released. The FBI reports that 69% of juvenile arrests were referred to juvenile court, and 6% were referred directly to criminal court. The others were referred to a welfare agency or to another police agency. The proportion of arrests sent to juvenile court has gradually increased from 58% in 1980 to 69% in 1996. In 1996, the proportion of juvenile arrests sent to juvenile courts was similar in cities, suburban areas, and rural counties. The proportion of juvenile arrests sent directly to criminal court in 1996 (6%) was the highest in the last two decades.

For juveniles and young adults, the property crime arrest rate changed little between 1980 and 1996, while the arrest rates for persons in their thirties and forties increased an average of nearly 50%

Property Crime Index arrests per 100,000 population



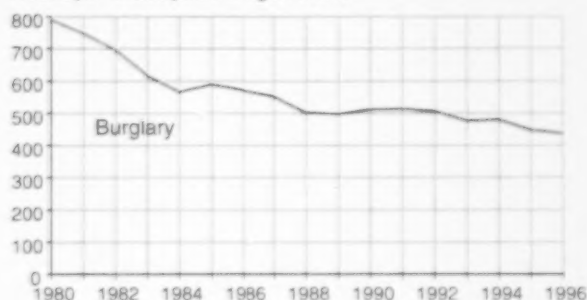
Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 2 on page 12 for detail.]

In contrast to their combined trend, the components of the Property Crime Index displayed substantially different juvenile arrest rate trends between 1980 and 1996

Burglary

- ◆ The juvenile arrest rate for burglary declined consistently between 1980 and 1996, with the 1996 rate 45% below that of 1980.
- ◆ Between 1980 and 1996, substantial and similar declines in burglary arrest rates were seen for all age groups below age 30. Although these levels were substantially below those of younger persons, the burglary arrest rates for persons in their thirties and forties increased by nearly one-third between 1980 and 1996.

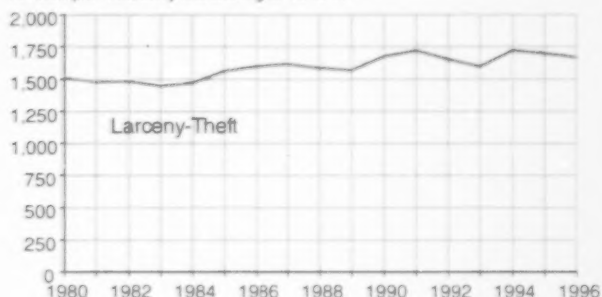
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Larceny-Theft

- ◆ Compared with other property offenses, the juvenile arrest rate for larceny-theft remained relatively constant between 1980 and 1996. Over this period the juvenile arrest rate for larceny-theft gradually increased, so that the 1996 rate was 10% above the rate in 1980.
- ◆ In 1996, larceny-theft arrests accounted for 70% of the FBI's Property Crime Index arrests. As a result, larceny-theft arrest trends dominate the Index and mask changes in the other offenses in the Index.

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Motor Vehicle Theft

- ◆ Juvenile arrests for motor vehicle theft soared between 1983 and 1990, with the rate up nearly 140% over this period.
- ◆ Between 1990 and 1996, the juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft declined substantially, returning to the 1987 level. This decline compensated for half of the increase that occurred between 1983 and 1990.

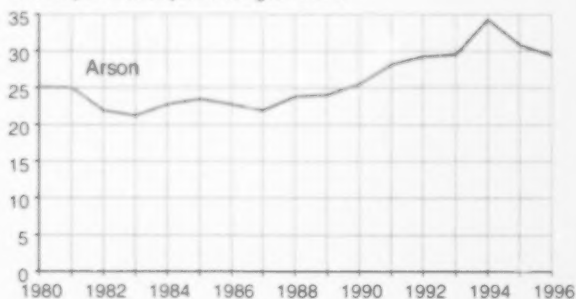
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Arson

- ◆ Compared with other property crimes, the number of juveniles arrested for arson is very small. During the 1980's, the rate of juvenile arrests for arson remained constant.
- ◆ Between 1990 and 1994, the rate of juvenile arson arrests increased from 26 to 34 per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 through 17. The juvenile arson arrest rate then declined in 1995 and 1996, falling back to the 1992 level.

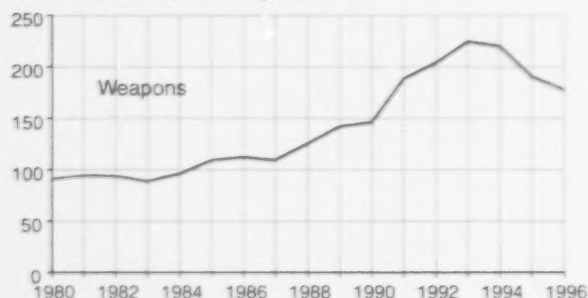
Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

Juvenile arrest rates for weapons law violations followed a pattern similar to murder arrests and declined 21% between 1993 and 1996

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17

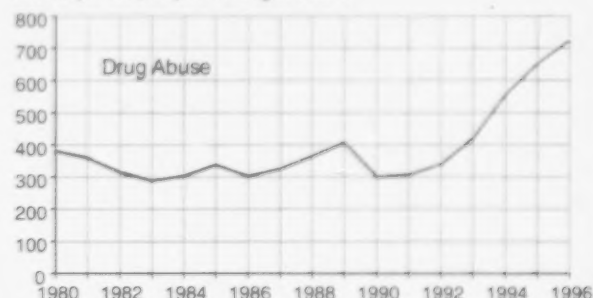


- ◆ From 1987 through 1993, the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations more than doubled. As with murder arrest rate trends, after this large increase, the juvenile arrest rate for weapons law violations declined in 1994, 1995, and 1996, with the 1996 rate dropping below the 1991 level.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

After more than a decade of stability, the juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse violations increased more than 70% between 1993 and 1996

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates for drug abuse increased 90% between 1980 and 1996. In comparison, arrest rates for persons in their early twenties increased about 50%, while drug abuse arrest rates for persons between ages 35 and 54 increased more than 400%.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

After more than a decade of stability, the rate of juvenile arrests for curfew and loitering law violations nearly doubled between 1993 and 1996

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17



- ◆ In 1996, 29% of juveniles arrested for curfew and loitering law violations were females and 28% were below the age of 15.
- ◆ Curfew and loitering law violations differed from other offense categories in that the racial composition of juveniles arrested for these offenses was similar to that of the general U.S. population.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

The increase in the juvenile arrest rate for alcohol-related offenses in 1996 came after a general pattern of decline that had lasted for a decade

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles ages 10 to 17

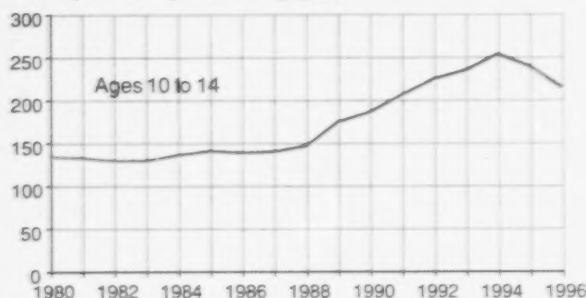


- ◆ Alcohol-related crimes include liquor law violations, drunkenness, and driving under the influence.
- ◆ Juvenile arrest rates for alcohol-related crimes increased 29% between 1995 and 1996, although the 1996 rate was still 11% below the 1990 rate.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

Although Violent Crime Index arrest rates for young juveniles were much lower than those for older juveniles, the arrest rate trends for both groups were similar

Arrests per 100,000 juveniles in age group



Arrests per 100,000 juveniles in age group



- ◆ The violent crime arrest rate of older juveniles (ages 15–17) has been, on average, four times greater than that of younger juveniles (ages 10–14). After this difference in magnitude has been compensated for, the violent crime arrest rate trends for younger and older juveniles are found to parallel each other from 1980 through 1996.
- ◆ Between 1994 and 1996, the rate declined more for younger juveniles (15%) than for older juveniles (12%).

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. [See data source note 1 on page 12 for detail.]

The juvenile share of the crime problem decreased in 1996

The relative responsibility of juveniles for the U.S. crime problem is hard to determine. Studying the proportion of crimes that are cleared by the arrest of juveniles gives one estimate of the juvenile responsibility for crime.

The clearance data in the *Crime in the United States* series show that the proportion of violent crimes attributed to juveniles is lower than their proportion of arrests but has also increased in recent years. Based on clearance data, the juvenile responsibility for violent crime grew from 9% in 1986 to 14% in 1995, but dropped to 13% in 1996. Since 1986, the juvenile proportion of violent crime clearances has increased for each of the four components of the Violent Crime Index: murder (from 5% to 8%), forcible rape (from 10% to 12%), robbery (from 12% to 18%), and aggravated assault (from 9% to 12%). However, between 1995 and 1996, while the juvenile proportion of the U.S. population increased, the juvenile proportion of crimes cleared declined in each violent offense category.

The juvenile responsibility for property crime was the same in 1986 and 1996 (23%). Juvenile responsibility for the four

Based on clearance information, juveniles are responsible for a substantially smaller proportion of violent crimes than property crimes

Percent of reported crimes cleared by arrest of person under age 18



- ◆ If the crimes cleared by law enforcement are representative of all crimes committed in 1996, then juveniles were responsible for 13% of all violent crimes and 23% of all property crimes. If, however, juveniles were more easily apprehended than adults, then the juvenile responsibility was less.

Data source: Compiled from *Crime in the United States* series for the years 1980 through 1996 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981 through 1997, respectively).

offenses within the Property Crime Index either remained the same or increased: burglary (21% in both years), larceny-theft (from 23% to 24%), motor vehicle

theft (from 20% to 22%), and arson (from 35% to 46%). The juvenile responsibility for property crimes in 1996 is near its average for the last two decades.

States with high rates of juvenile Property Crime Index arrests tend to have low Violent Crime Index arrest rates

State	Percent Reporting	1996 Arrest Rate*		Comparison With U.S. Rate		State	Percent Reporting	1996 Arrest Rate*		Comparison With U.S. Rate	
		Violent Crime Index	Property Crime Index	Violent Crime Index	Property Crime Index			Violent Crime Index	Property Crime Index	Violent Crime Index	Property Crime Index
Total U.S.	72%	471	2,444			Missouri	58%	473	3,106	0%	27%
Alabama	96	217	1,422	-54%	-42%	Montana	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Alaska	89	361	3,223	-23	32	Nebraska	72	94	2,766	-80	13
Arizona	94	455	3,606	-3	48	Nevada	98	364	3,199	-23	31
Arkansas	95	303	2,243	-36	-8	New Hampshire	76	126	2,188	-73	-10
California	98	610	2,249	30	-8	New Jersey	96	655	2,182	39	-11
Colorado	74	240	2,826	-49	16	New Mexico	59	330	3,309	-30	35
Connecticut	77	524	2,731	11	12	New York	69	981	1,344	108	-45
Delaware	51	985	4,438	109	82	North Carolina	98	437	1,955	-7	-20
Dist. of Columbia	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	North Dakota	61	79	2,557	-83	5
Florida	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	Ohio	58	427	2,246	-9	-8
Georgia	61	241	1,941	-49	-21	Oklahoma	100	318	2,771	-33	13
Hawaii	100	361	3,121	-23	28	Oregon	86	330	3,987	-30	63
Idaho	98	232	4,106	-51	68	Pennsylvania	77	474	1,680	1	-31
Illinois	23	NA	NA	NA	NA	Rhode Island	95	486	2,448	3	0
Indiana	56	512	2,314	9	-5	South Carolina	99	433	2,219	-8	-9
Iowa	81	225	2,022	-52	-17	South Dakota	69	296	3,894	-37	59
Kansas	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	Tennessee	39	NA	NA	NA	NA
Kentucky	20	NA	NA	NA	NA	Texas	87	349	2,447	-26	0
Louisiana	61	478	2,854	1	17	Utah	92	265	3,735	-44	53
Maine	98	168	3,431	-64	40	Vermont	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Maryland	79	838	3,184	78	30	Virginia	93	238	2,082	-49	-15
Massachusetts	83	515	1,058	9	-57	Washington	68	387	4,196	-18	72
Michigan	82	313	1,607	-34	-34	West Virginia	100	74	1,221	-84	-50
Minnesota	90	344	3,215	-27	32	Wisconsin	100	361	4,613	-23	89
Mississippi	23	NA	NA	NA	NA	Wyoming	58	171	3,161	-64	29

* Throughout this report, juvenile arrest rates were calculated by dividing the number of arrests of persons ages 10-17 by the number of 10- through 17-year-olds in the population. In this table only, arrest rate is defined as the number of arrests of persons under age 18 for every 100,000 persons ages 10-17. Juvenile arrests (arrests of youth under age 18) reported at the State level in *Crime in the United States* cannot be disaggregated into more detailed age categories so that the arrest of persons under age 10 can be excluded in the rate calculation. Therefore, there is a slight inconsistency in this table between the age range for the arrests (birth through age 17) and the age range for the population (ages 10-17) that are the basis of a State's juvenile arrest rate. This inconsistency is slight because just 2% of all juvenile arrests involved youth under age 10. However, this inconsistency is preferred to the distortion of arrest rates that would be introduced were the population base for the arrest rate to incorporate the large volume of children in a State's birth to 9-year-old population.

NA = Rates were classified as not available when reporting agencies represented 50% or less of the State population.

Data source: Analysis of arrest data from the FBI's *Crime in the United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), tables 5 and 69, and population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census' *Population of the U.S. and States by Single Year of Age and Sex: 1996* [machine-readable data file released in April 1997].

Technical Note

Arrest rates were calculated by dividing the number of youth arrests made in the year by the number of youth living in reporting jurisdictions. While juvenile arrest rates reflect juvenile behavior, many other factors can affect the size of these rates.

For example, jurisdictions that arrest a relatively large number of nonresident juveniles would have a higher arrest rate than a jurisdiction whose resident youth behave in an identical manner.

Therefore, jurisdictions, especially small jurisdictions, that are vacation destinations or regional centers for economic activity may have arrest rates that reflect more than the behavior of their resident youth.

Other factors that influence the magnitude of arrest rates in a given area include the attitudes of its citizens toward crime, the policies of the jurisdiction's law enforcement agencies, and the policies of other components of the justice system. Consequently, comparison of

juvenile arrest rates across States, while informative, should be done with caution.

In most States, not all law enforcement agencies report their arrest data to the FBI. Rates for these States are then necessarily based on partial information. If the reporting law enforcement agencies in these States are not representative of the entire State, then the rates will be biased. **Therefore, reported arrest rates for States with less than complete reporting may not be accurate.**

What do arrest statistics count?

To interpret the material in this Bulletin properly, the reader must have a clear understanding of what these statistics count. The arrest statistics report the number of arrests made by law enforcement agencies in a particular year—not the number of individuals arrested, nor the number of crimes committed. The number of arrests is not equivalent to the number of people arrested because an unknown number of individuals are arrested more than once in the year. Nor do arrest statistics represent a count of crimes committed by the arrested individuals because a series of crimes committed by one individual may culminate in a single arrest or a single crime may result in the arrests of more than one person. This latter situation, many arrests resulting from one crime, is relatively common in juvenile law-violating behavior, because juveniles are more likely than adults to commit crimes in groups. This is the primary reason why arrest statistics should not be used to indicate the relative proportion of crime committed by juveniles and adults. Arrest statistics are most appropriately a measure of

flow into the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Arrest statistics also have limitations in measuring the volume of arrests for a particular offense. Under the UCR Program, the FBI requires law enforcement agencies to classify an arrest by the most serious offense charged in that arrest. For example, the arrest of a youth charged with aggravated assault and possession of a controlled substance would be reported to the FBI as an arrest for aggravated assault. Therefore, when arrest statistics show that law enforcement agencies made an estimated 211,500 arrests of young people for drug abuse violations in 1996, it means that a drug abuse violation was the most serious charge in these 211,500 arrests. An unknown number of additional arrests in 1996 included a drug charge as a lesser offense.

What do clearance statistics count?

Clearance statistics measure the proportion of reported crimes that were resolved by an arrest or other, exceptional means (e.g., death of the offender, unwillingness of the victim to cooperate). In 1996, the FBI re-

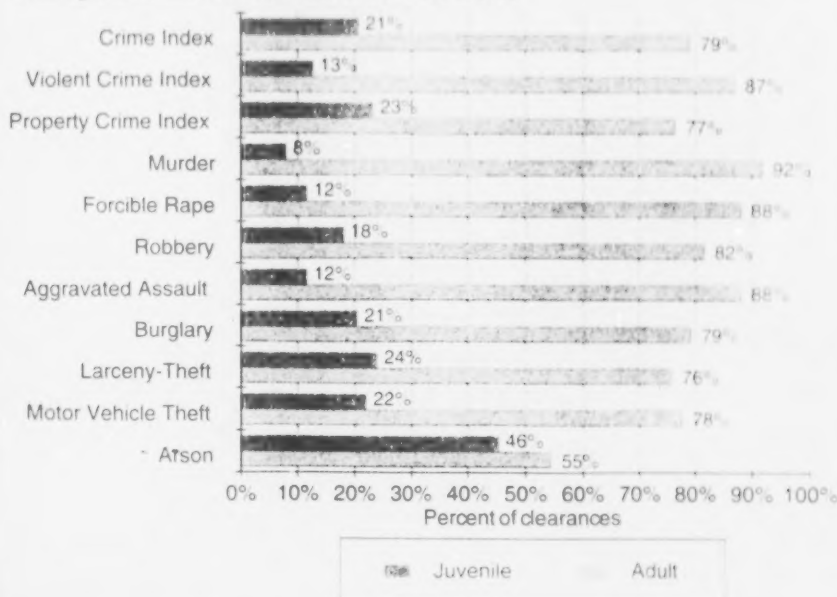
ported that 14% of all burglaries reported to law enforcement agencies were cleared by arrest or other exceptional means. This does not mean that a person was convicted in 14% of all burglary cases or even that a person was referred to court in 14% of all burglary cases. An unknown portion of the arrests that clear a reported crime were handled within the police department and released. Another aspect of clearance statistics is that a single arrest may result in many clearances. For example, one arrest could clear 40 burglaries if the person was charged with committing all 40 of these crimes. Or multiple arrests may result in a single clearance if the crime was committed by a group of offenders.

For those interested in juvenile justice issues, the FBI also reports information on the proportion of clearances that were cleared by the arrest of persons under age 18. This statistic is a better indicator of the proportion of crime committed by this age group than is the arrest proportion, although there are some concerns about this interpretation.

For example, the FBI reports that persons under age 18 accounted for 32% of all robbery arrests but only 18% of all robberies that were cleared in 1996. If it can be assumed that offender characteristics of cleared robberies are similar to those of robberies that were not cleared, then it would be appropriate to conclude that persons under age 18 were responsible for 18% of all robberies in 1996. However, the offender characteristics of cleared and noncleared robberies may differ for a number of reasons. If, for example, juvenile robbers were more easily apprehended than adult robbers, the proportion of robberies cleared by the arrest of persons under age 18 would overestimate the juvenile responsibility for all robberies. To add to the difficulty in interpreting clearance statistics, the FBI's reporting guidelines require the clearance to be tied to the oldest offender in the group if more than one person is arrested for a crime.

Given these and other factors, interpretation of reported clearance proportions may involve some concerns, but these data are the closest measure available of the proportion of crime committed by persons under age 18 and should provide a barometer of the changing contribution of persons under age 18 to the Nation's crime problems.

In 1996, juvenile arrests accounted for 8% of all murders cleared (or solved) by law enforcement agencies, as well as 18% of robberies, 21% of burglaries, and 22% of motor vehicle thefts



Data source: *Crime in the United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), table 28.

Notes

In this Bulletin "juvenile" refers to persons below age 18. This definition is at odds with the legal definition of juveniles in 1996 in 17 States—10 States where all 17-year-olds and 3 States where all 16- and 17-year-olds are defined as adults.

These FBI data are counts of arrests within age of arrestee and offense categories from all law enforcement agencies that reported complete data for the calendar year. The proportion of the U.S. population covered by these reporting agencies ranged from 72% to 86% between 1980 and 1996.

Estimates of the number of persons in each age group in the reporting agencies' resident population assume that their population age profiles are like the Nation's.

Reporting agencies' total populations were multiplied by the U.S. Bureau of the Census' most current estimate of the proportion of the U.S. population for each age group.

Data source notes

1. Analysis of arrest data from unpublished FBI reports for 1980 through 1994 and from *Crime in the United States* reports for 1995 and 1996 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996 and 1997, respectively); population data from the Bureau of the Census for 1980 through 1989 from *Current Population Reports*, P25-1095 (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1993), and for 1990 through 1996 from *Population of the U.S. and States by Single Year of Age and Sex: 1996* [machine-readable data files released April 1997].

2. Analysis of arrest data from an unpublished FBI report for 1980 and from *Crime in the United States 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997); population data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 1980 from *Current Population Reports*, P25-1095 (Washington, DC: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1993), and for 1996 from *Population of the U.S. and States by Single Year of Age and Sex: 1996* [machine-readable data file released April 1997].

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